

## How Shall a Sparrow Fly

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# How Shall a Sparrow Fly

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## Summary

*“I... I don’t think you can be blamed, not, not when you’re so young,”* Wilbur had once said.

But Wilbur was dead now. He couldn’t say anything anymore.

And Tommy could be blamed, because Wilbur was only talking about how he loved Tommy, and Tommy had killed him.

Or, the Black Bird Fly au that is somehow angstier than the actual fic, featuring sad and guilty tommy, dream being a terrible person, and more sadness.

## Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Tommy had been traveling with Wilbur for a few weeks. Things were... strange around him.

For one, Wilbur always fed Tommy. Even when Tommy would do something stupid, like accidentally drop some of their food into the river, or burn himself on fire wood, or get sick from magic repression and make Wilbur really worried, Wilbur always fed him.

“Food is a necessity,” Wilbur said, “I would never take that away from you.”

But his father had always taken away his food. Wasn’t that a thing people did? Wasn’t it just a natural punishment for messing up?

Apparently, Wilbur didn’t think so.

Also, Wilbur always insisted upon preening and nesting even though Tommy did *nothing* to deserve them. Sure, he made the fire and helped Wilbur carry things as they headed back to the capital on foot, but surely Wilbur realized that it was *Tommy’s* fault that they had to walk in the first place? If Tommy hadn’t abused his wings so much, he would still be able to fly. Instead, he was no better than a wingless nobody.

“It’s not your fault,” Wilbur said whenever Tommy helpfully pointed this out, “You’re doing great, baby.”

Oh, that was another thing. Wilbur seemed to really care about Tommy, even though Tommy had just met him. It was... strange. But not a bad strange. It made him feel warm inside.

Wilbur reminded Tommy a little of Sam. He felt safe around Wilbur. Or, at least, as safe as he could be when he was running away from his father.

One night, however, as Tommy was taking watch—because even Wilbur needed sleep, as much as he wanted to deny it—Tommy heard the shuffling of feet.

It was probably nobody. Tommy shouldn’t wake Wilbur up over an animal or something that decided to walk nearby.

Another part of Tommy worried that Wilbur would be angry if Tommy didn’t wake him up as soon as something suspicious happened. What if he deemed Tommy to be untrustworthy? What if he got rid of him?

Split between these options, Tommy just sat dead still, his wings stiff behind him.

Tommy jumped slightly when rustling sound happened again, this time louder.

It was still probably nothing. Tommy was probably freaking out over a deer or something. Those were common in the forest, right? Sam used to talk about them, at any rate.

Still... it wouldn’t hurt to check, would it? Tommy would just quickly spring up, investigate the situation, and upon realizing that he was being stupid and it was just an animal, Tommy would return to the campsite like nothing had happened. Easy.

So, with that thought in mind, Tommy stood up, ignoring the hammering of his heart as he walked toward the sound. Tommy needed to stop being such a coward; it was just an animal.

*It was just an animal, it was just an animal, it was just an animal—*

A hand slammed over Tommy's mouth, and Tommy let out a muffled scream as another hand grabbed him firmly by the arm.

"Hush, Thomas," his father's familiar voice whispered in his ear, "I would hate for someone to be at the wrong place at the wrong time."

Tommy's heart froze in his chest. He knew what that meant. If Tommy screamed, his father would kill whoever came to help. He might kill Wilbur. Then where would Tommy be?

He couldn't let Wilbur die.

Tommy slackened in his father's hold, staying dead silent. His father's iron grip on Tommy's arm loosened a bit, but Tommy could still feel the painful pulsing sensation where a bruise was almost certainly going to form.

"Good boy," his father praised softly, moving his hand to stroke Tommy's feathers. Tommy shuddered even as he leaned toward the touch.

And then his father's fingers stilled.

For a moment, there was no sound at all, not even the hooting of a stray owl. Just complete, terrifying silence.

Tommy could hear his heart beating against his chest, and he held his breath so he couldn't hear how painfully gasping it was.

"But you haven't been very good recently, have you, Thomas?" his father asked quietly.

Now Tommy couldn't even breathe if he tried, but he had to answer, he had to, so he said,

"No."

It came out as a gasping whisper, and Tommy was relieved that his father had understood it at all, or else his father would've gotten angry for mumbling.

"No," his father agreed, his tone holding an air of finality that made Tommy dizzy with anxiety, "Tell me what you did."

Tommy tried to think past the buzzing in his brain. He could barely form words, but his father was now holding onto one of his stronger feathers, and Tommy let out a cry of pain as he plucked it out.

"Tell me what you did."

"I-I ran away," Tommy admitted quietly.

“And?”

“I disobeyed you.”

“And?”

Tommy swallowed, the final truth the most horrifying of them all. “I-I tried to kill you.”

His father hummed. “And what should the punishment be for such actions, Thomas? After everything I’ve done for you, after everything I sacrificed for your sake, you betrayed me.”

*You betrayed me, you betrayed me, you betrayed me.*

Tommy whimpered, trying to hold back tears. His father didn’t like it when Tommy cried, and Tommy had already done so many things wrong.

“I’m sorry. Please, I’m sorry—”

His father laughed, but it wasn’t a good laugh. “Sorry isn’t good enough, Thomas.”

Tommy shut up.

“If you were anyone else, I would’ve killed you for your betrayal.” His father harshly spun Tommy around so that Tommy was staring up at his emotionless mask. “And you would deserve it.”

Tommy would deserve it. He nearly killed his father. Who did that? Who was so vile that they killed their own father after all that their father had done for them?

Tears were cascading down Tommy’s eyes, and he was shaking.

“I’d deserve it,” he agreed softly.

His father sighed, gently caressing Tommy’s cheek. “But you’re my son,” his father said, his harsh tone softening ever so slightly, “So I’m going to be merciful.”

An ever so small part of Tommy relaxed at the thought.

“But that doesn’t mean you can just return to me and expect open arms.” His father dropped his hand, and Tommy forced himself not to clutch onto him for more. “You need to do something for me, Thomas.”

Tommy nodded quickly. “Yes, sir.”

“Do you know what you need to do?”

Tommy knew what he needed to do, even if the thought made his heart pound uncomfortably. He’d do anything to be welcomed back into his father’s arms.

“Yes, sir.”

His father nodded, brushing some of Tommy's bangs away from his face. "Good boy," he said, "I'll give you a week to get the job done."

The next morning, Wilbur woke up while Tommy was frantically building the campfire for breakfast.

"Are you alright?" Wilbur asked.

Tommy quickly rubbed at his face, as if that would hide his tear tracks or shaky demeanor from last night.

"I'm fine," Tommy said softly, "Just..." He scrambled for a lie. "...had a nightmare."

Wilbur's expression softened. "Oh," he responded with equal softness, "Do you want to talk about it?"

Tommy quickly shook his head. He wasn't sure he trusted himself to not give the events of last night away.

Not to mention, Tommy was afraid he wouldn't be able to do what needed to be done if he had Wilbur comfort him over a fake nightmare.

The week quickly started running out. They were approaching nearer and nearer to the capital, and every time Tommy found an opportunity to get the job done, Tommy never managed to bring himself to do it in time.

Prime, he was such a coward. He couldn't even do this one thing for his father.

On the night of the sixth day, Tommy knew he was almost out of time. It needed to happen now, or it would never happen at all.

He and Wilbur were sitting around the campfire, staring at its ethereal glow.

"I've always loved fire, you know," Wilbur said softly, staring at one of his golden feathers, which had fluttered to the ground. Wilbur picked it up. "There was always something about it that... well, I don't know. It's filled with so much life that it steals the life of everything else around it."

Tommy felt like Wilbur had taken an anvil and placed it on top of his chest.

He carefully and discretely plucked a black feather from his wings.

"I don't get it," Tommy replied, "Why would you like that?"

Wilbur smiled slightly. "I don't know," he admitted quietly, "There's something beautiful about the glow of the flames, I guess."

Tommy crushed the feather in his hand, feeling the dangerous magic at his fingertips. He was careful not to touch the log they were sitting on with them.

“I guess,” Tommy agreed, staring at the fire.

He was glad Wilbur liked fire.

Wilbur sighed, turning to face Tommy. His face was so *warm*, warmer than the fire even, and Tommy felt his chest twist at the sight.

“I-Tommy...” Wilbur laughed. “Prime, I’m not sure how to say this.”

Tommy waited, his hand still clenched in a tight fist around the ashes of his feather. He was afraid to open his fist, even though he knew what he needed to do.

Wilbur smiled. “Tommy, I love you,” he said.

Tommy froze.

“I know it might seem sudden, or strange.” Wilbur was still smiling, even though the look on Tommy’s face was likely one of pure horror. “But you’re like a brother to me, and I care about you so, so much.”

Tommy couldn’t breathe. Why did Wilbur have to say this now? Why—

“So that’s why I really like the fire,” Wilbur admitted, glancing back at the flames, “It reminds me of the first time I met you.”

Tommy unclenched his fist, and the dark ashes fell into his lap. Wilbur didn’t notice; he was too busy staring into Tommy’s eyes.

The words came out of Tommy’s mouth before he could stop them. “I love you too.”

And then Tommy was hugging Wilbur, being careful not to touch his clothes with his hand, and Wilbur was hugging Tommy so gently that for a moment, Tommy thought that it really was Sam holding him close.

But Tommy wasn’t supposed to be doing this. He was supposed to be redeeming himself.

He let Wilbur hold him for a little longer before slowly bringing his hand up.

“Actually,” Wilbur breathed out, “I have to tell you, I—”

Wilbur slumped suddenly as Tommy brushed his fingers against Wilbur’s neck, and Tommy collapsed backward and off of the log at the sudden weight.

Tommy was now staring straight up at the stars, Wilbur’s body still warm on top of him.

Thomas had done it.

It took Tommy a long time to finally move from that spot on the ground where Wilbur lay on top of him. His body was still warm, and Tommy tried to pretend that Wilbur was just asleep, that Wilbur was just comforting Tommy after a nightmare.

Eventually, as the fire was nothing more than dying embers, Tommy forced himself to sit up and carefully roll Wilbur off of himself.

In the dark, it was hard to make out much, but there were some things that were obvious. The limpness of Wilbur's body, the way Wilbur's chest didn't move up and down, the way Tommy couldn't feel a heartbeat.

The way Wilbur was undoubtedly and irrevocably dead.

And Tommy started sobbing.

*"I... I don't think you can be blamed, not, not when you're so young,"* Wilbur had once said.

But Wilbur was dead now. He couldn't say anything anymore.

And Tommy could be blamed, because Wilbur was only talking about how he loved Tommy, and Tommy had killed him.

So, Tommy buried his face into Wilbur's chest, all too aware of how it was colder, all too aware of how empty it was of life.

Thomas had done it, but was it truly worth it?

Tommy searched for his father later night, leaving Wilbur's body behind at their campsite. He wouldn't be strong enough to carry it anyway.

He had done it, even if it was at the last minute. His father would want him now.

Thomas could come home.

He found his father only ten yards off away from his campsite. His father had his own small little campfire, and the light of the flames reflected on his mask with a strange flickering glow.

Tommy slowly approached him. His father looked up.

"Oh," his father said, sounding surprised, "I almost forgot about you."

Tommy's heart stuttered.

"Wha-what?"

His father heaved a sigh and got to his feet, walking up to Tommy. "Well, while you were wasting your time instead of getting the job done—" Tommy flinched. "—I found someone."

*What?*

What did that mean? What did his father mean by that?

“Ranboo,” his father said softly, “Come over here, please.”

Tommy watched in horror as a kid that Tommy hadn’t noticed before stood up, walking obediently toward Dream. In the light of the fire, Tommy could make out his wings.

They were dual wings, which was rare, but not completely unheard of.

What was astonishing was the two colors.

Charcoal black *and* cloudy white.

Tommy recognized those wings. He suddenly recognized the name.

“Thomas,” his father said, grasping Ranboo by the shoulder, “This is Ranboo. I believe you have met before?”

Tommy nodded mutely, staring at Ranboo in horror.

Ranboo... Ranboo had let Tommy stay the night once. He lived on his own, as far as Tommy could tell, and Ranboo had been happy for the small amount of company, even though Tommy had left the same day.

Had... had Tommy led his father to him?

“I-I don’t understand,” Tommy whispered, his voice hoarse.

His father laughed. “You see, Thomas,” he said, “Ranboo has both black *and* white wings, and he is actually eager to be loyal to me. Do you know what that means?”

Tommy shook his head. He didn’t know what it meant. He didn’t *want* to know what it meant.

“It means I don’t need you anymore,” his father said, grinning wildly, “You’re obsolete, you’ve served your purpose. You’re expendable.”

*Don’t need you, obsolete, expendable.*

Tommy didn’t understand. Was his father... replacing him?

And Ranboo looked so different from the last time Tommy had seen him. He was quieter. His eyes were cast downward, and Tommy wondered if it was guilt or something else that was causing him to be so subdued.

Had Tommy’s father done that to him? Had Tommy led his father to hurt Ranboo?

Tommy looked back up at his father. “But-but, father—”

His father laughed. "Oh, Thomas," he said, "You were never my son."

Tommy's world stopped.

What? But that couldn't be right. That—that *couldn't be true*.

His father stepped closer to Tommy, letting go of Ranboo's shoulder. He grabbed Tommy by the jaw, squeezing so tight that Tommy felt his cheeks dig into his teeth.

"And I was never your father," he said, "You were just a little chess piece in my game, a little pawn in my fight against Philza."

Tommy still didn't understand.

His father laughed again. "You always were a dense one." He had clearly seen the shocked confusion on Tommy's face. "Do I need to spell it out for you? I kidnapped you. I raised you as my own. And now I don't need you anymore. Now I have someone stronger than you, someone *better* than you will ever be."

*Kidnapped, stronger, better.*

"But I said I would grant you mercy," his father—no, not his father, *Dream*—said, "So here's your mercy, *Tommy*."

Too late Tommy saw the black feather in his-Dream's other hand. Too late did Tommy try to pull himself away from Dream.

Dream touched his face, and the world disappeared.

"*Tommy?*"

Everything hurt. Why did everything hurt so badly? Wasn't Tommy supposed to be dead.

"Wilbur?" Tommy cried out, trying to reach out for his friend and finding himself unable to move. "I'm I dead?"

"*It's me, baby,*" Wilbur said, his voice as soft as it was before, "*But you're not dead.*"

That explained why everything hurt so much.

"I'm sorry," Tommy gasped, "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry—"

"*It's okay,*" Wilbur promised, "*You're not to blame. Just promise to find Tech—*"

Tommy's eyes shot open, and he was staring up at Ranboo's heterochromatic eyes.

"It worked," Ranboo whispered, his face looking relieved, "You're alive!"

Tommy stared blankly up at Ranboo, not moving. He didn't want to be alive. Wilbur was dead. He wanted to be with Wilbur.

Instead, he was here.

"Ranboo decided to revive you," Dream said coldly, "You should be grateful to him."

Tommy wasn't grateful, but his fath-Dream had given him a command, so he nodded. He didn't trust himself to speak.

"Come along, Ranboo," Dream sighed.

And with that, they left. Tommy listened as they launched themselves into the air, leaving Tommy behind.

Tommy was a fool.

Did he even deserve that name, *Tommy*? Sam had given it to him, but he had died. Wilbur had called him that, but he had died at Tommy's own hand.

But he wasn't Thomas. Thomas had belonged to Dream, and that was all a lie.

But then he vaguely recalled a story that Sam had once told him. A story about a hero named Theseus. It was sad.

That sounded about right.

So as the sun started to peak over the horizon, Theseus stood up and returned to his old camp. There Wilbur's body still lay, exactly where Tommy had left it.

Theseus spent the entire day digging a grave for Wilbur. When it was done, he found a rock and covered it with flowers.

"I'm sorry, Wilbur," he whispered again, "I'm so damn sorry."

But nobody replied.

## End Notes

Happy Birthday Will!

I hope everyone enjoyed the pain and if you didn't neither did I.

Please be nice in the comments, thank you for reading. <3

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